

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION SINAI

AMCONSUL DHAHREN

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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USMISSION USNATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

USCINCEUR

SECDEF WASHDC 0000

JCS WASHDC 0000
CIA WASHDC 0000
USICA
NSC WASHDC 0000
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS VIA POUCH

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD, TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - JULY 28

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR JULY 28, 1978.
FYI ONLY, SPOKESMAN TODAY WAS THOMAS RESTON.

MR. RESTON: LET ME READ HERE THE TEXT OF A STATEMENT WHICH WAS MADE BY OUR EMBASSY IN LEBANON YESTERDAY.

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QUOTE THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN BEIRUT SUGGESTS THAT AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO DO NOT HAVE BUSINESS IN LEBANON SHOULD LEAVE AT THEIR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE. EMBASSY OFFICE HOURS REMAIN 8 A.M. TO 4:30 P.M. MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY. END QUOTE.

AS TO THE STATUS OF THE PERSONNEL, I THINK, AS WE SAID YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, WE EXPECT THE EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND SOME OF THE DEPENDENTS TO BE LEAVING IN THE NEAR FUTURE, BUT WE DONT HAVE THE EXACT DATES FOR THEIR DEPARTURES. WE DONT KNOW WHETHER SOME HAVE ALREADY LEFT OR NOT, BUT THERE IS NO PARTICULAR REASON WHY THE EMBASSY WOULD HAVE RELAYED THIS INFORMATION TO US URGENTLY. WE WILL BE INFORMED, OF COURSE, BY THE EMBASSY IN DUE COURSE WHEN IT TAKES PLACE.

Q. WHY HAVE YOU TAKEN THIS STEP?

A. I THINK IT IS A PROCESS WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR SEVERAL WEEKS NOW. IT IS REALLY AN ACCUMULATION OF EVENTS. IT DOES NOT REPRESENT ON THE PART OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT ANY NEW OR DRAMATIC JUDGMENT. THERE IS NO ONE PARTICULAR EVENT WHICH HAS STIMULATED IT. IT IS NORMAL PRECAUTIONS.

Q. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF ANNOUNCING THIS STEP IF IT IS A PROCESS THAT HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR SEVERAL WEEKS IN THE

SENSE OF WHAT IMPACT DID YOU EXPECT IT TO HAVE ON THE SIDES WHICH ARE FIGHTING IN LEBANON?

A. I AM NOT SURE WE HAD IN MIND ANY PARTICULAR IMPACT THAT WE WERE PREDICTING. I WANT TO RE-EMPHASIZE THAT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE HAVE REACHED A NEW OR DRAMATIC JUDGMENT ABOUT THE SITUATION THERE. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN ACCUMULATION OF EVENTS OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS WHICH HAVE CAUSED US TO TAKE THIS ACTION.

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Q. WHEN THE DEPARTMENT MAKES A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS SORT, IT OBVIOUSLY INTENDS FOR THAT ANNOUNCEMENT TO BE SEEN AS A SIGNAL OF SOME KIND TO SOMEBODY. WHO AND WHAT IS THE SIGNAL INTENDED TO REACH?

A. IN THE FIRST PLACE, IT WAS NOT THE DEPARTMENT THAT MADE THE ANNOUNCEMENT, IT WAS THE EMBASSY IN BEIRUT.

Q. DOES THE EMBASSY IN BEIRUT OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY?

A. I THINK THE EMBASSY IN BEIRUT HAS ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS -- I THINK IN 1975 AND 1976 -- INFORMED THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY RESIDENT IN BEIRUT OF PROBLEMS AND MADE SIMILAR ANNOUNCEMENTS. THERE ARE ABOUT 300 AMERICANS RESIDENT IN BEIRUT AT THE MOMENT. THE DEPARTURE OF FIVE EMBASSY STAFFERS, I THINK THERE ARE PRESENTLY SOME 30 PEOPLE IN THE EMBASSY, ATTACHED TO THE EMBASSY THERE, AND THIS DEPARTURE IS OF FIVE OF THEM.

Q. YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU ARE REMINDING US THAT THE EMBASSY ISSUED SUCH STATEMENTS AND WARNINGS TO THE AMERICAN CITIZENS IN BEIRUT DURING '75 AND '76. OR IS THE EMBASSY ANTICIPATING A RETURN TO THE SITUATION WHICH IS SIMILAR TO '75 - '76?

A. NO. CERTAINLY, I AM NOT GOING TO MAKE SUCH A STATEMENT. WE DO NOT HAVE ANY ANTICIPATION FOR WHAT HAPPENS,

OR WE HAVE NO WAY OF MAKING A PREDICTION ON WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE THERE.

WHAT WE DO STATE IS THAT WE FAVOR THE USE OF MAXIMUM
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RESTRAINT ON THE PART OF ALL PARTIES.

WE FAVOR THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE STATE OF LEBANON, AND WE FAVOR THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT BEING ABLE TO ESTABLISH ITS AUTHORITY THROUGHOUT LEBANON. IT IS A

VERY DELICATE PROBLEM, AND WE URGE MAXIMUM RESTRAINT
ON ALL PARTIES.

Q. DID YOU ANTICIPATE THAT THIS STATEMENT WOULD CAUSE
SOME PANIC IN BEIRUT -- WHICH IS THE SITUATION TODAY?

A. I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY ON THE QUESTION OF WHAT WE
ANTICIPATED.

Q. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE THAT THIS KIND OF STATEMENT MAY
SUGGEST TO THE SYRIAN ARMY THAT THE UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT DOES NOT THINK VERY HIGHLY OF THEM AS A
PEACEKEEPING FORCE?

A. I CANT DEAL WITH POSSIBILITIES.

Q. THIS SEEMS TO ME A TOTALLY INADEQUATE EXPLANATION.
THIS HAD TO BE SEEN BY THE DEPARTMENT, AND BY THE
EMBASSY THERE, AS HAVING A CONSIDERABLE PHYCHOLOGICAL
IMPACT. IT COMES AT A TIME WHEN THE FIGHTING HAS TEMPOR-
ARILY DIED DOWN (WE DONT KNOW HOW "TEMPORARY") AND THEN
SUDDENLY YOU HIT EVERYBODY WITH THIS.

AND YOU STAND HERE AND DONT REALLY HAVE AN ADEQUATE
EXPLANATION OF WHY IT WAS DECIDED TO DO IT AT THIS
TIME -- LEAVING EVERYTHING UP IN THE AIR.

CANT THE DEPARTMENT DO A LITTLE BETTER AND GO BACK AND
FIND OUT HOW MUCH CONSULTATION THERE WAS WITH BEIRUT,
WITH THE EMBASSY, ON MAKING THIS ANNOUNCEMENT BEFORE IT
WAS MADE? AND WHY THEY DECIDED TO GO AHEAD AT A TIME
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WHEN THE FIGHTING HAS DIED DOWN?

A. I THINK I TRIED TO EXPLAIN THAT THE REASON FOR THE
AMBASSADOR DECIDING TO HAVE THIS PARTICULAR DRAWDOWN AT
THIS TIME AND AT THE SAME TIME TO INFORM THOSE AMERICANS
RESIDENT IN BEIRUT -- TO MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENT HE DID -- I
THINK CAME ABOUT AS NOT STEMMING FROM ANY PARTICULAR
INCIDENT; BUT HAS BEEN AN ACCUMULATION OF EVENTS OVER

THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. IT IS NOT SOMETHING WHICH IS
NECESSARILY NEW TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT WHICH THE EMBASSY
MADE YESTERDAY. IT HAS BEEN DRAWING DOWN FOR SOME TIME.

Q. ISN'T IT IN EFFECT, A GLOOMY PREDICTION OF WHAT IS
GOING TO HAPPEN THERE IN THE FUTURE, WHICH AS WE HAVE
JUST BEEN TOLD, HAS HAD A PANICKY EFFECT ON THE PEOPLE
IN BEIRUT TODAY?

SURELY, THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS ANNOUNCEMENT SHOULD HAVE

BEEN RECOGNIZED IN ADVANCE; AND I AM WONDERING WHAT SORT OF DISCUSSION -- WHAT THE BACKGROUND WAS IN DECIDING TO DO IT -- RECOGNIZING --

OR DID THE DEPARTMENT FAIL TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPLICATIONS THAT THE STATEMENT WOULD BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE?

A. I REALLY CANT ADDRESS WITH SPECIFICITY ALL THE FACTORS WHICH WENT INTO OUR DECISION IN THE CONSULTATIONS WE TOOK. I THINK THAT YOU CAN BE ASSURED THAT WE WEIGHED THIS DECISION.

Q. WOULDNT IT HAVE BEEN WISER TO GO AHEAD QUIETLY, AND CONTINUE TO DRAW DOWN; WITHOUT SHOOTING THIS ROCKET UP
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INTO THE AIR? WHAT SORT OF GENIUS DOES IT TAKE TO GO PUBLIC, WHEN IT WOULD SEEM THAT CONTINUING THE PRIVATE EVACUATION WOULD HAVE KEPT A BIT MORE CALM --

A. I AM REALLY NOT IN A POSITION OF GETTING INTO THE VARIOUS WAYS THAT THIS MIGHT HAVE BEEN DONE.

Q. COULD YOU PLEASE GIVE US THE NUMBERS? YOU TOLD US ABOUT 5 OUT OF 30 -- WHAT ABOUT THE DEPENDENTS AT THE EMBASSY ETC?

A. 17.

Q. OUT OF HOW MANY?

A. I WILL TRY TO GET THE TOTAL NUMBER OF THE DEPENDENTS STILL THERE, FOR YOU.

Q. SHALL WE CONSIDER THE ACTION OF THE EMBASSY AS A SIGNAL TO THE WARRING FACTIONS IN LEBANON THAT "UNLESS YOU SHAPE UP AND COOPERATE WITH SARKIS, WE ARE GOING TO BE INVOLVED IN A DIFFERENT MANNER THAN -- YOU ARE ALREADY INVOLVED?"

A. NO, WHAT I THINK IT IS INTENDED TO BE IS A SIGNAL TO THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN BEIRUT THAT UNLESS THEY HAVE URGENT BUSINESS THERE, THEY SHOULD LEAVE. I DONT HAVE ANY OTHER INTERPRETATION TO PUT ON IT FOR YOU.

Q. IF WE DO RECOGNIZE THE SYRIANS AS A "PEACEKEEPING" FORCE, WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE ASK THEM TO EXERCISE MAXIMUM RESTRAINT? DO WE WANT TO RESTRAIN THEIR PEACEKEEPING ACTIVITIES OR RESTRAIN SOME OTHER ACTIVITIES? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, WHEN YOU ASK THE SYRIANS TO "EXERCISE MAXIMUM RESTRAINT?"

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A. WE MEAN THE SAME THING WITH REGARD TO THE SYRIANS THAT WE MEAN WITH REGARD TO ALL THE OTHER PARTIES. IN LEBANON AND ALL OF THE PARTIES WHICH HAVE INFLUENCE OVER THE PARTIES INSIDE LEBANON; AND THAT IS, WE ARE INTERESTED IN SEEING A REDUCTION IN THE VIOLENCE AND A REDUCTION IN THE AMOUNT OF ARMAMENTS IN THE AREA.

Q. DO WE FEEL THAT THE PEACEKEEPING SYRIANS ARE VIOLENT?

A. I CANT ADDRESS THAT.

Q. WAS THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT ADVISED IN ADVANCE THAT THE EMBASSY WAS GOING TO ISSUE THIS STATEMENT?

A. I DONT KNOW.

Q. CONSIDERING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT IT HAD ON THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW WHETHER WE DID THEM THE COURTESY OF TALKING THIS OVER WITH THEM BEFORE WE HIT THEM WITH IT.

A. I DONT REALLY THINK I AM VERY HOPEFUL ABOUT GETTING AN ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION.

Q. YOU SAY THAT YOU FAVOR A REDUCTION OF ARMS IN LEBANON.

A. YES.

Q. ARE YOU AWARE THAT ISRAEL -- AND THESE ARE REPORTED AND PUBLISHED AND VERIFIED BY VARIOUS PUBLICATIONS -- THAT ISRAEL HAD BEEN SHIPPING THROUGH THE PORT OF JUNICH UNTIL LATE LAST WEEK, ARMS TO THE FALANGE AND THE UNCLASSIFIED

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RIGHT-WINGERS? WHERE DO YOU STAND ON THIS?

A. I THINK WE HAVE ADDRESSED THIS QUESTION BEFORE. I THINK WE HAVE SEEN SOME REPORTS TO THAT EFFECT AND WE HAVE HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH THE ISRAELIS ABOUT IT.

Q. ALMOST SINCE THE LEEDS CONFERENCE CONCLUDED, ALL OF THE SIGNALS FROM OFFICIALS OF THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN VERY INDEFINITE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE SUBSEQUENT MEETING OF THE FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTERS WITH SECRETARY VANCE. AND THERE ARE REPORTS NOW THAT THAT MEETING MAY BE SLIPPING.

COULD YOU GIVE US SOMETHING HARD ON WHETHER OR NOT THAT MEETING ACTUALLY IS GOING TO HAPPEN -- AND IF SO, WHEN?

A. I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO GIVE YOU THE DETAILS OF POSSIBLE SCHEDULES. THOSE THINGS ARE STILL BEING WORKED ON.

THE SECRETARY ANNOUNCED AT LEEDS CASTLE THAT HE EXPECTED TO TRAVEL TO THE MIDDLE EAST IN EARLY AUGUST. THIS REMAINS OUR EXPECTATION AND PLANNING IS UNDER WAY FOR THE TRIP. BUT I REALLY HAVE NOTHING NEW, BEYOND THAT IT REMAINS OUR EXPECTATION. WE EXPECT TO GO, AND WE ARE GOING THE PLANNING FOR THE TRIP AT THE MOMENT.

Q. YOU HAVE HAD NO INDICATION OFFICIALLY FROM THE EGYPTIANS THAT THEY DONT WANT THIS MEETING TO TAKE PLACE OR THAT THEY ARE UNCERTAIN ABOUT WHETHER THEY WANT TO PARTICIPATE?

A. I AM AFRAID I AM JUST GOING TO HAVE TO BE STUCK ON MY LINE, WHICH IS THAT WE EXPECT THE MEETING TO TAKE PLACE.

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Q. WITH NO SCHEDULE?

A. I DONT HAVE A SCHEDULE FOR YOU. I WOULD NOTE THAT THE SECRETARY HAS GOT TO BE HERE FROM THE 2 TO 4 FOR THE ASEAN MEETING -- BUT I DONT HAVE A PRECISE SCHEDULE TO GIVE TO YOU.

Q. SO THE PLANNING FOR THE TRIP CON TINUES ALONG THE SAME LINES TODAY AS IT WAS YESTERDAY, AND THE DAY BEFORE?

A. YES, IT DOES.

2. IN ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN AT THE NOON BRIEFING

TODAY, THE FOLLOWING ANSWER HAS BEEN PROVIDED TO THE PRESS OFFICE.

Q. WHAT IS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF EMBASSY DEPENDENTS IN BEIRUT?

A. -- 12 PERSONS.

Q. DID WE NOTIFY THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IN ADVANCE OF THE EMBASSY'S ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN BEIRUT?

A. -- WE INFORMED THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT JUST BEFORE
THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE. VANCE

NOTE BY OC/T: POUCHED ALGIERS

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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